

SECTION 2

This manual emphasizes the public health roles of the Environmental Health Division (EHD) and the Communicable Disease Control/ Epidemiology Section (CD/EPI) in emergency situations. The general role of each agency is summarized below.

Role of Environmental Health Division

EHD protects public health through:

- **Permitting and Inspecting.** EHD issues permits, reviews plans, and inspects facilities, including on-site sewage treatment systems (septic systems), food service establishments, and small public water supplies. The goal is to promote compliance with specific codes designed to ensure the public's health.
- **Training.** EHD provides training and educational environmental health materials to industry, the public, and the media on all aspects of environmental health.
- **Collaborating with other divisions and sections.** For example, if CD/EPI is notified that a food handler is infected with hepatitis A, EHD will inspect the food service establishment. Using the data collected by both agencies, the Chief of Epidemiology will determine whether the illness poses a threat to public health. If it does, CD/EPI will alert the public and assist the district clinics to implement the disease control instructions, such as immune globulin.
- **Providing technical assistance.** EHD provides technical assistance to district offices and to other health departments across the State on all environmental health issues. EHD also works with other agencies that share public health and environmental concerns (e.g., Department of Ecology, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency).

Role of Communicable Disease Control/Epidemiology

CD/EPI protects public health through:

- Conducting disease surveillance and investigating disease outbreaks to identify patterns of disease and formulate a disease prevention and control plan.
- Determining outbreak control measures.
- Coordinating disease control efforts through public education, contact with the media, and collaboration with EHD to alter environmental factors that contribute to disease.
- Collaborating with other county health departments, the state health department, and as necessary with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Providing epidemiological technical assistance to analyze data during a public health emergency that will help officials allocate disease control resources.